

# A Word from the Commandant



**by Col. Glenn R. Weidner, U.S. Army**

I am proud to offer a very special edition of ADELANTE as the last issue to be published by the U.S. Army School of the Americas. On 15 December, 2000, the School will furl its colors after 54 years of distinguished service to the United States and to the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is only appropriate that we dedicate this final issue to recounting the history of the School in its various forms since its founding in 1946.

Over 61,000 soldiers and civilians from 21 countries have passed through

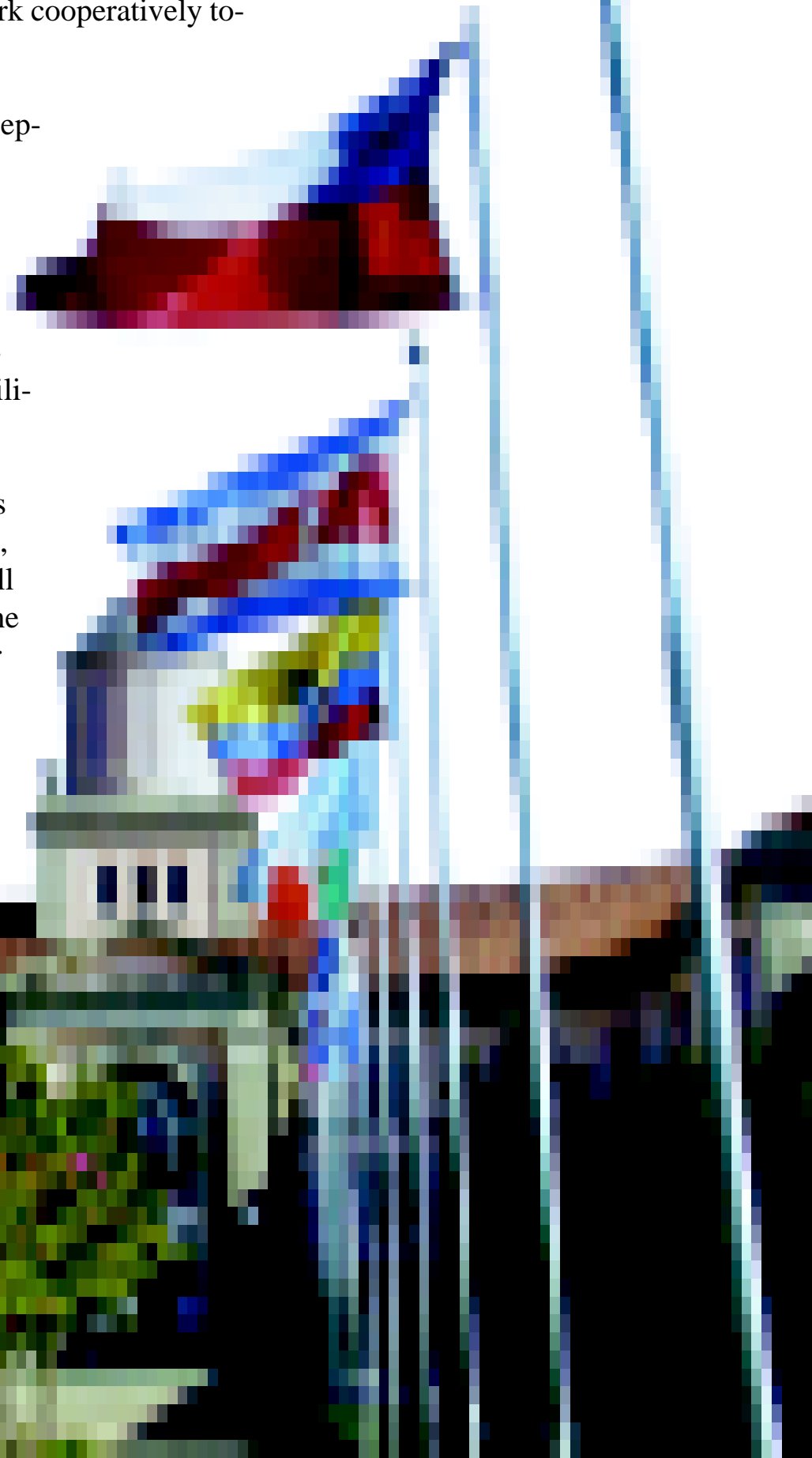
courses at the School during a period that coincided with the epic struggle of the Cold War. That conflict resonated deeply in the Americas, as externally-supported civil wars aggravated traditional rivalries and the socio-economic ills that have plagued the region for centuries. As a result, the School's role in training Latin American militaries to face insurgent threats has eclipsed its broader purpose, a purpose born in the late 1940s before the lines of the East-West rivalry had solidified. That pur-

pose was to promote hemispheric peace by bringing the militaries of the region together to study professional matters, resulting in greater mutual understanding and potential for cooperation. The School constituted an important piece of the system that emerged under the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), a system dedicated to the peaceful resolution of disputes, collective response to security threats, and social and economic progress for the peoples of the Americas.

The School of the Americas is closing, having accomplished its Cold War mission. It is now time to move forward, restructuring, as we have in the past, to meet

new needs in a new century. The overriding goals of the OAS Charter are still of critical importance to each of our nations, and will serve to guide the formation of a new institution dedicated to preparing military professionals to work cooperatively towards their achievement.

Joe Leuer has done an exceptional job of researching the School's past, and linking it to events that influenced the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the region. His service is typical of the outstanding contributions made by the School's military and civilian staff, both U.S. and Latin American, over the years. To each of them, I express thanks on behalf of all graduates, and congratulations on a job well done. We count on them to set the course for USARSA's successor institution.



# Greetings from the Subcommandant



**by Col. Patricio Haro Ayerve,  
Ecuadorian Army**

After devoting 54 years to hemispheric security and the professional development of the members of the Armed Forces of all the countries of the Americas in an effort to ensure peace and democracy, the United States Army School of the Americas is closing its doors to usher in the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

The School was founded in 1946 to address the tactical needs of the United States Army after the Second World War; later, however, it refocused its mission to meet the security requirements of the countries of the region during the early period of the Cold War.

During these years, the School has received overwhelming support from the Armed Forces of the countries belonging to the American security system. Hundreds of guest instructors, officers, and noncommissioned officers have made professional contributions in accomplishing the School's mission as they have trained thousands of students from all corners of the continent. These individuals who come to train at this institution of learning stand as its "reason for existence."

The environment in which the School of the Americas was established has gradually changed over the years, as the post Cold War era and unipolarity have produced a much different scenario, which, consequently, explains why the countries of the world have been forced to redefine and redirect their security issues. Therefore, the emergence of new and different threats to nations and the security system of their inhabitants make it necessary to train the armed forces and police officers of the Americas to deal with these new concepts.

Inter-American cooperation in security matters is fundamental, and, therefore, it becomes necessary to establish a new institute with a continental focus; consequently, the School of the Americas, with complete satisfaction for having accomplished its mission, will "pass the torch" to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

As Assistant Commandant of the School, it is my privilege to serve as the senior Latin American officer among the contingent of guest instructors, and I have the honor of speaking on their behalf. Observing the ideals and principles that motivate them as they perform their professional duties in this American forum, let me therefore affirm that this faculty will continue wholeheartedly to exhibit the same enthusiasm and professional dedication to duty as they serve the new Institute. They will continue to fulfill their responsibilities with the same fervor that they have exhibited while assigned to our beloved School of the Americas.

The School of the Americas has planted some very significant "seeds" in the "fertile soil" of what will soon be the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. These elements include a heartfelt spirit of Americanism, present in all the soldiers assigned to the School, the profound conviction that all security activities should be conducted in accordance with international standards and with an absolute respect for the human rights of individuals involved in conflicts, and the reaffirmation, embedded within each Latin American trained at the School, that unconditional subordination to the legitimately elected democratic civilian government and the democratic system itself is the only form of government that involves the genuine participation of the population in the transcendental governmental decisions regarding the well-being and progress of the citizenry.

As for me, I will commit myself wholly to the proposed missions of the new Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation based on my experience as Assistant Commandant of the School of the Americas, and will make every effort possible to ensure that the legacy of Americanism, lawfulness, and democracy left by the School be firmly grounded in the students receiving training during the first productive academic year of the new Institute.

I would like to express my gratitude to the School of the Americas for having served for more than half a century as a symbol of hemispheric brotherhood and the propagator of insightful teachings in security, democracy, and respect for human rights, despite beliefs to the contrary by the School's detractors.

# Message from the Command Sergeant Major

Noncommissioned Officers (NCO) have been an integral part of the U.S. Army School of the Americas' (USARSA) rich 54 year history. Whether from the early podium in the 1950's teaching the NCO Engineer Course, or during field training exercises with Medical Assistance or Counternarcotic students, their professional contributions fostered success for our School.



However, former Command Sergeant Major of USARSA, Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Carlos Legoas, foresaw a greater role for our NCOs. Through his efforts the NCO Exchange Program was born out of a concept proposed at the 1990 Conference of the American Armies, and from a follow-up resolution at the 1991 Training and Military Education Conference, held at USARSA. Although Legoas and USARSA spearheaded the program, the exchanges involved all of Fort Benning.

The first of these exchanges was with Ecuador in 1996. Fifteen Ecuadorian soldiers came to Fort Benning for a two-week orientation. Soon after that, 16 U.S. NCOs spent three weeks in Ecuador.

"Through the exchanges, Latin Americans observed our NCOs in action," Legoas said back then. "Hopefully, they will say 'these are the type of NCOs we would like to have in our army.'"

Yet a greater vision stirred within Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Ricardo Layne, who received the torch as the "top NCO" for USARSA from Legoas. Layne was determined to share our NCO Professional Military Education System and its importance in enhancing the professionalism of the NCO Corps with our Latin American neighbors.

After much deliberation with the Training and Doctrine Command, U.S. Southern Command and Fort Benning, Layne's dream came true in 1998 with the activation of the Roy Benavidez Noncommissioned Officer Academy. The academy was named after the late Master Sgt. Roy Benavidez, a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient and the most decorated Hispanic NCO to serve in our Army.

"We wanted all our Latin American neighbors to ben-

efit from our great NCO Corps," said Layne. "This NCO academy sets a solid foundation for the future of the Latin American NCO."

Sgt. Maj. Rogelio Schettini, of the Peruvian Navy, has been a guest instructor with our NCO academy since November 1999.

Schettini said he is convinced that USARSA's continual engagement with Latin America's NCO Corps will help them one day become as professionally developed as ours.

"The professionalism exemplified by the NCOs at the School of the Americas rubs off on all of us," he said. "My intent, as is the intent of all the Latin American NCOs who come to this school as guest instructors or students with this great NCO Academy, is to spread that professionalism within our own NCO Corps back home."

My commitment to spreading the principles of our NCO Corps throughout Latin America expanded during USARSA's first U.S./Latin American NCO Conference held in July 1999.

During that conference, I served as the principal official. The dialogue between the 30 Latin American NCOs representing 12 countries and our senior NCOs allowed an increased understanding of U.S. military organization and force structure; assisted regional militaries to meet future mutual challenges by emphasizing the role of the NCO Corps and promoted long-term relationships and military-to-military contacts.

I am humbled and proud to be the bearer of the "torch" held before by great noncommissioned officers—with great visions for USARSA's role in developing Latin America's NCOs.

I extend my deepest gratitude to everyone assigned to USARSA. Your commitment to this school has made a positive impact on the countries of our hemisphere.

Now, as USARSA closes and the new Institute opens, we stand and behold as the Roy Benavidez NCO Academy continues to serve as a beacon and bridge towards the future professional development of Latin America's NCO Corps.